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Del Pos et al.

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(54) **HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCE FOR WALL MOUNTING**

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See application file for complete search history.

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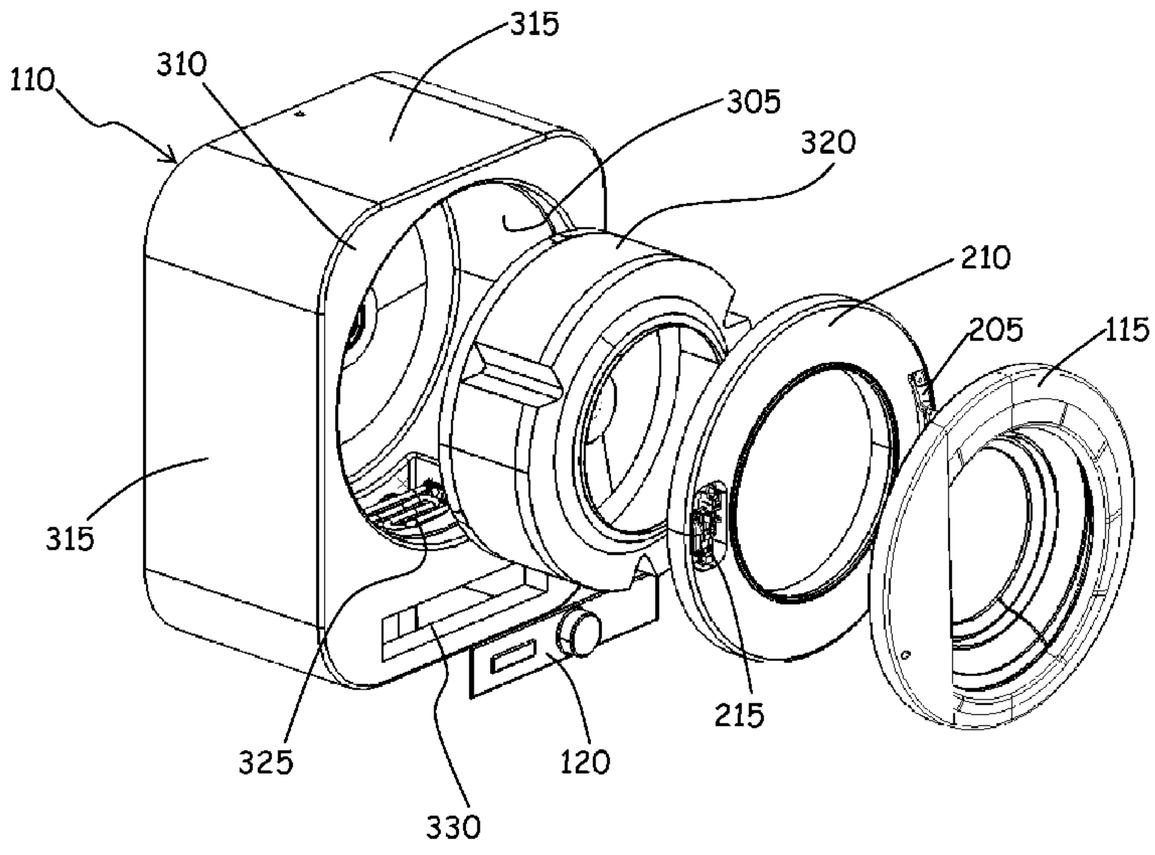
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A household appliance (**100**) has an external casing (**110**) housing a rotatable drum assembly (**320**) and adapted to be mounted to a wall (**105**). The casing is shaped so as to define therein a tub (**305**) for rotatably accommodating the rotatable drum assembly.

20 Claims, 10 Drawing Sheets



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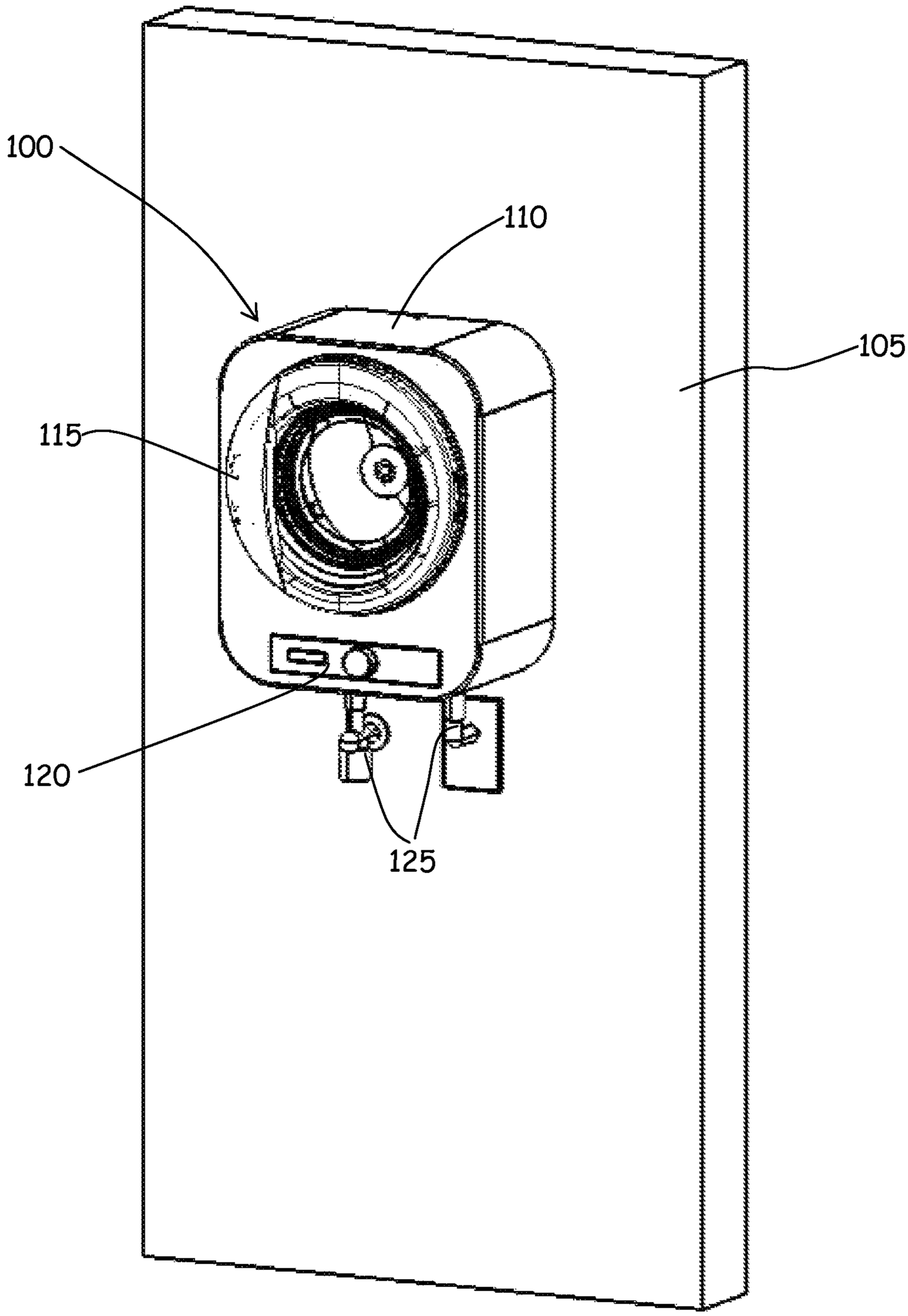

FIG. 1

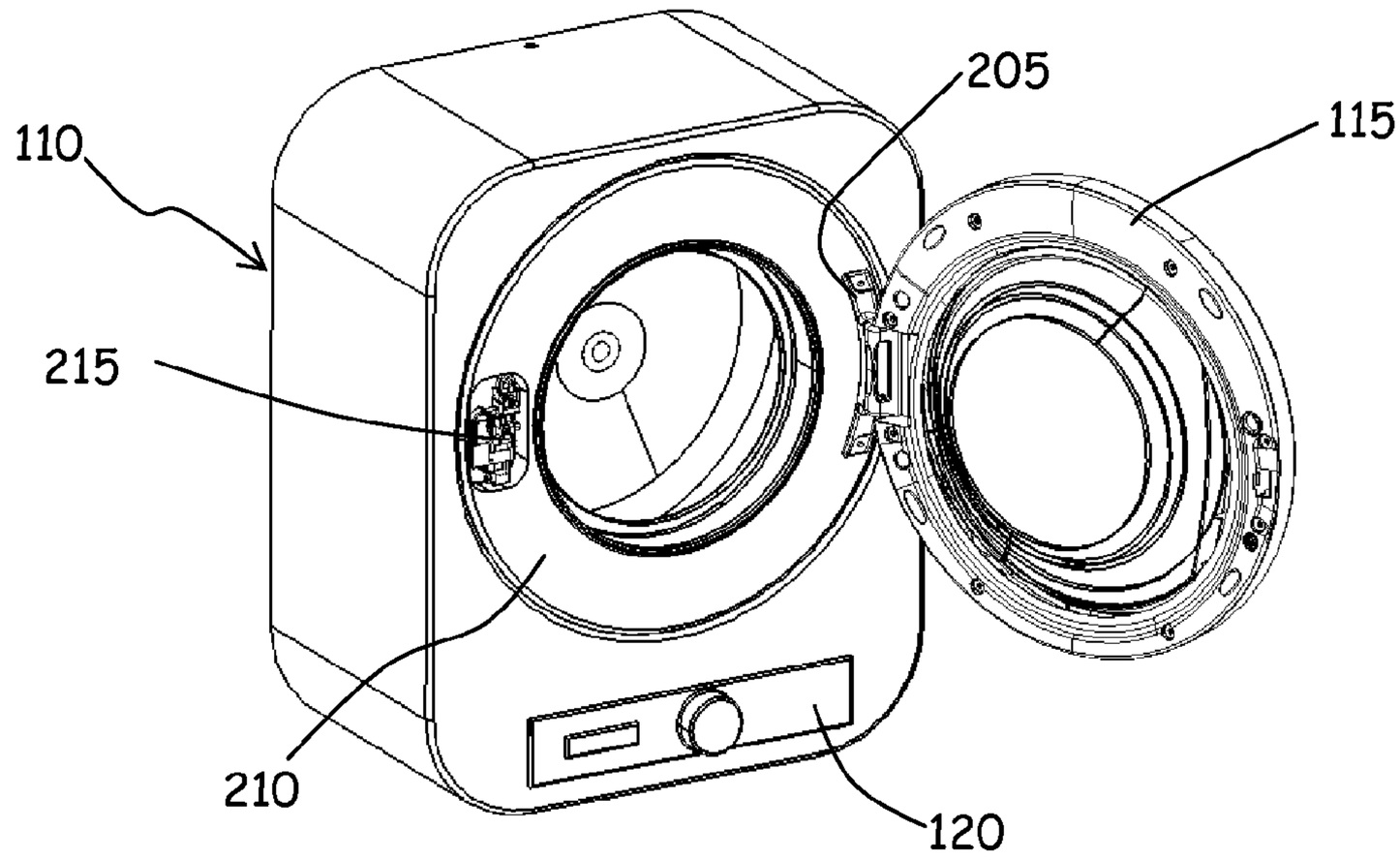
110
215
210
205
115
120

FIG. 2

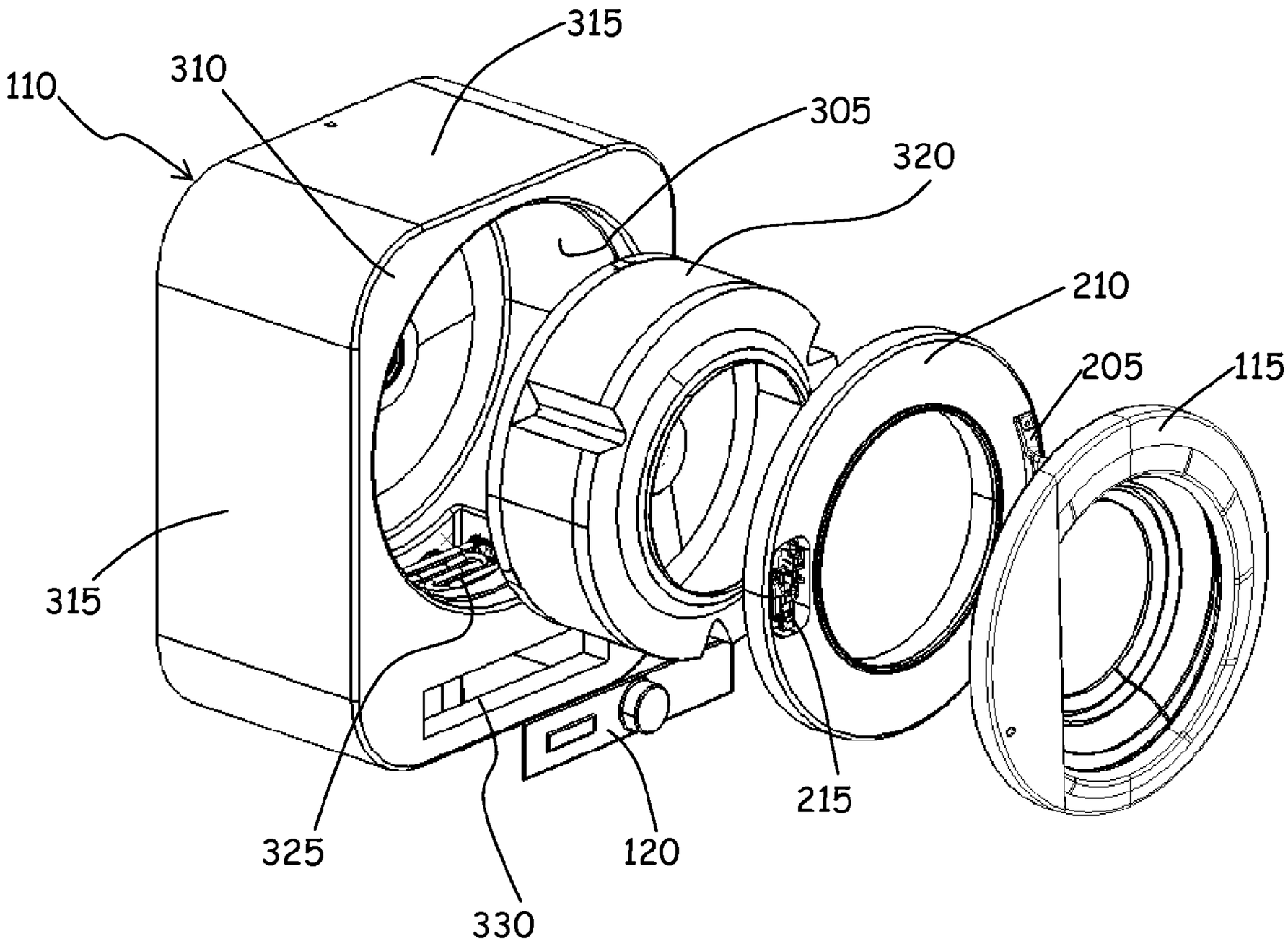
315
310
110
305
320
210
205
115
315
325
330
120
215

FIG. 3

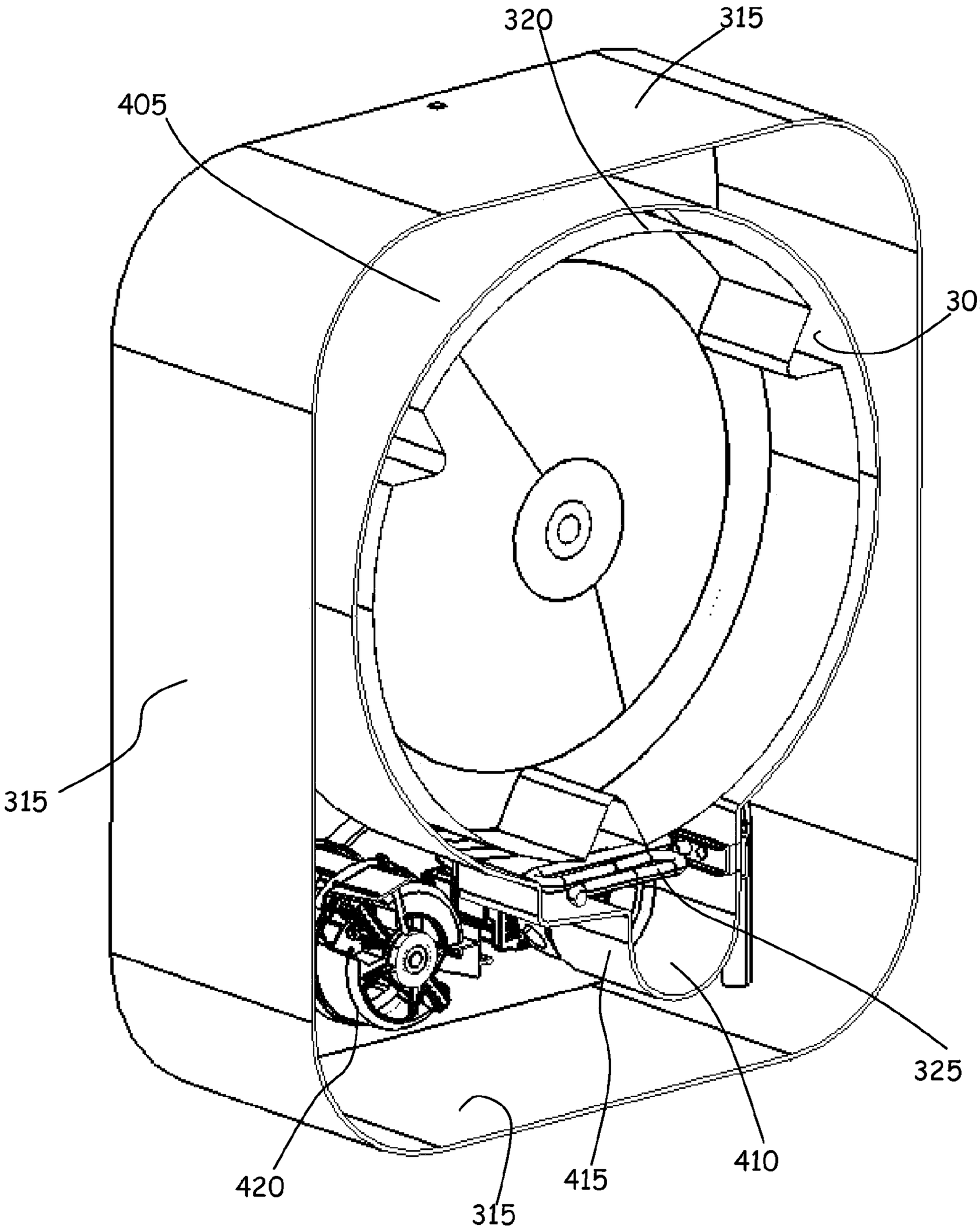

FIG. 4

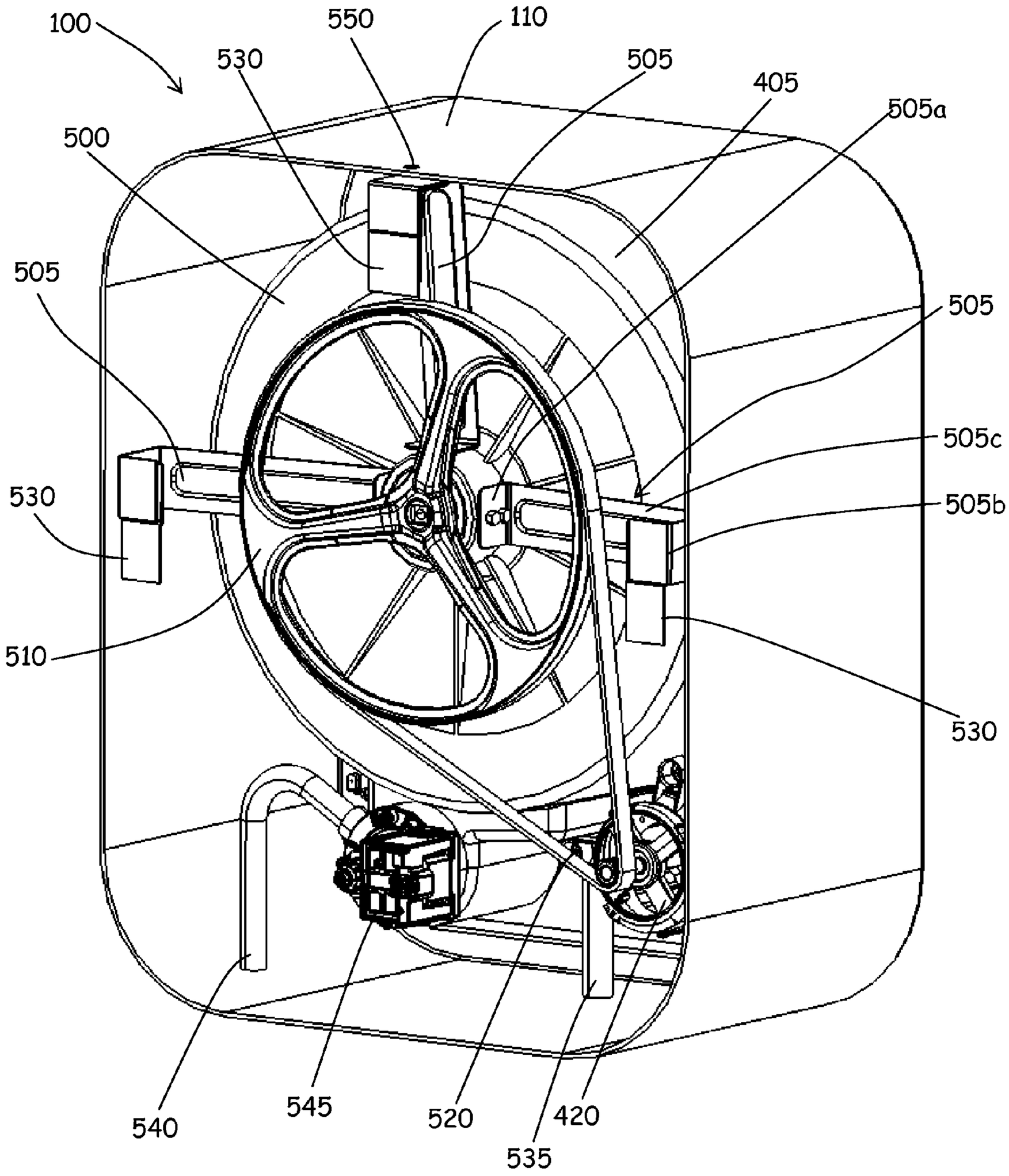
100
550
110
530
505
405
505a
500
505
505
505c
530
505b
510
530
540
545
520
420
535

FIG. 5

FIG. 6A

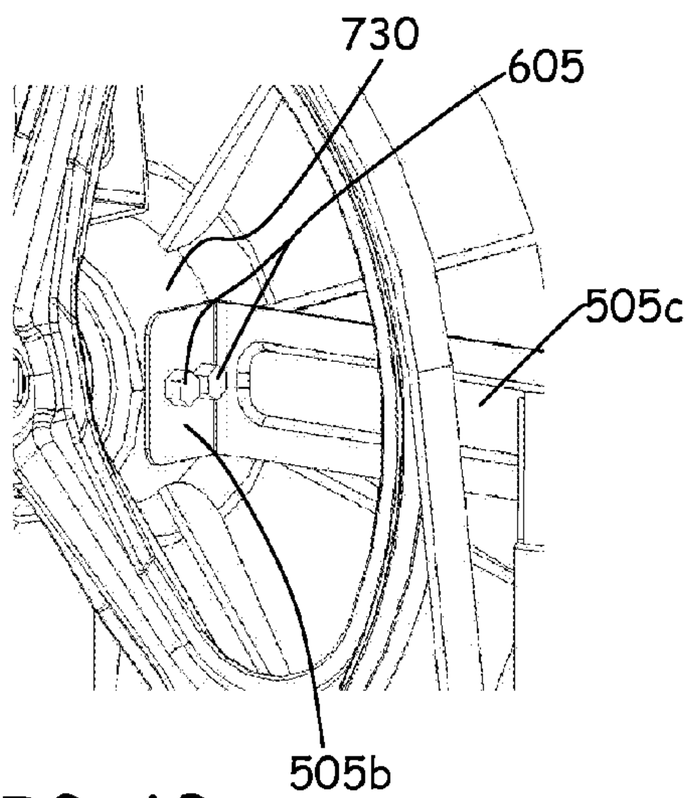

FIG. 6B

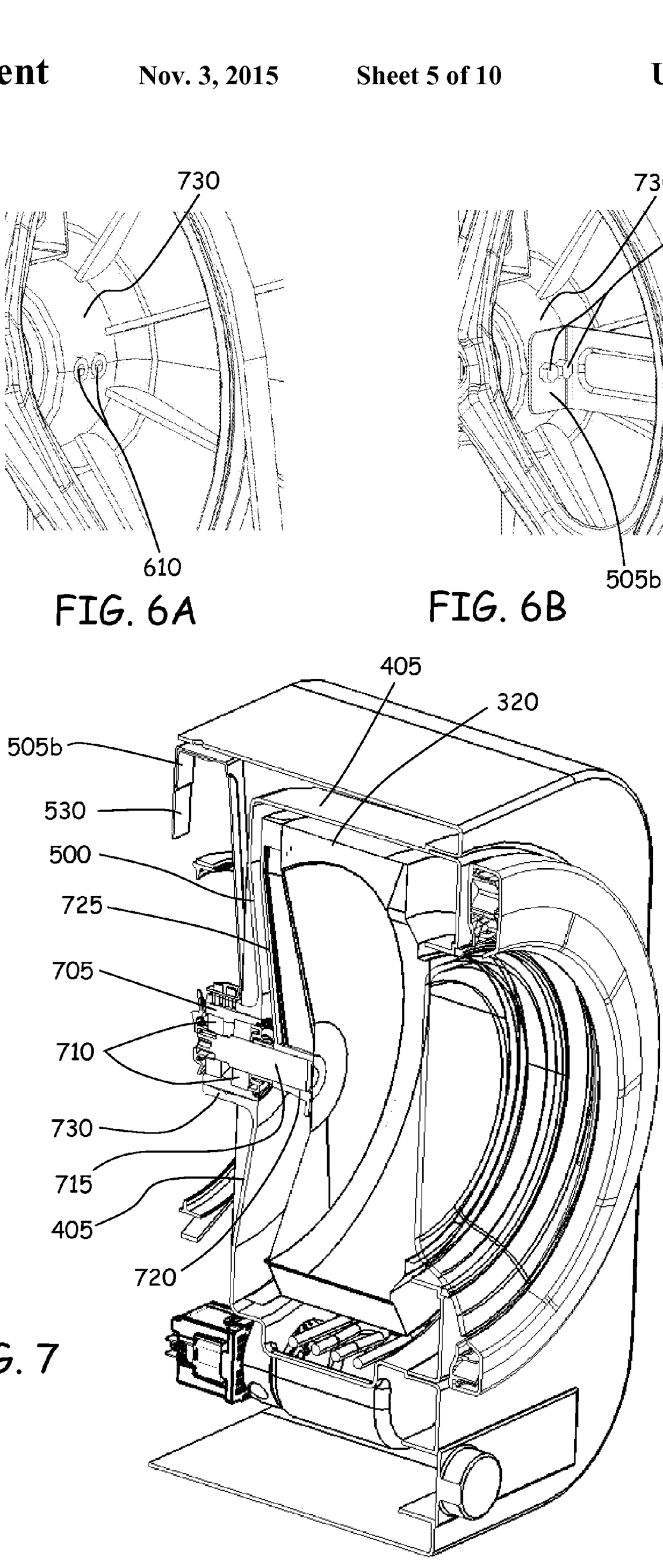

FIG. 7

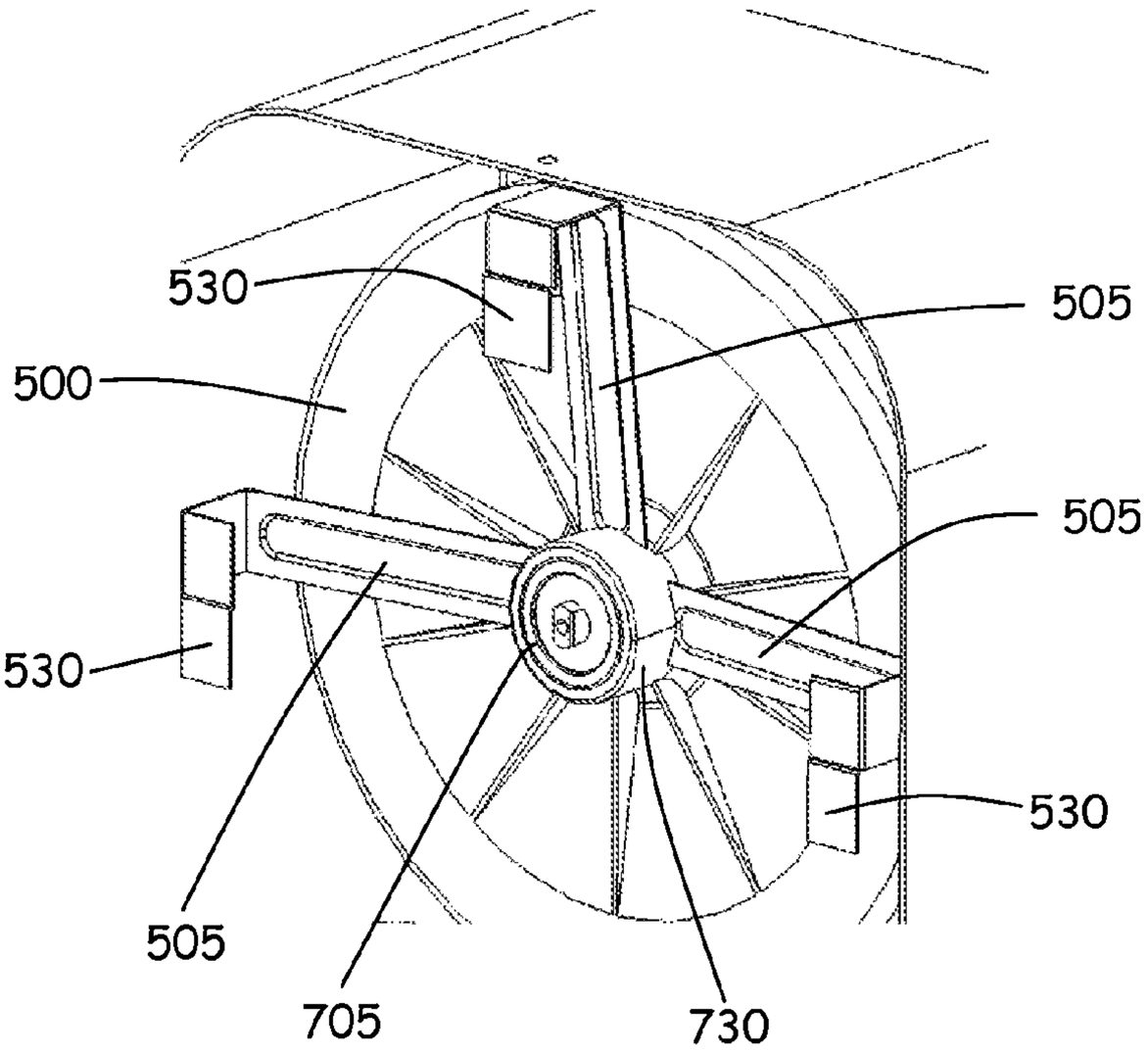
530
505
500
505
530
530
505
705
730

FIG. 8

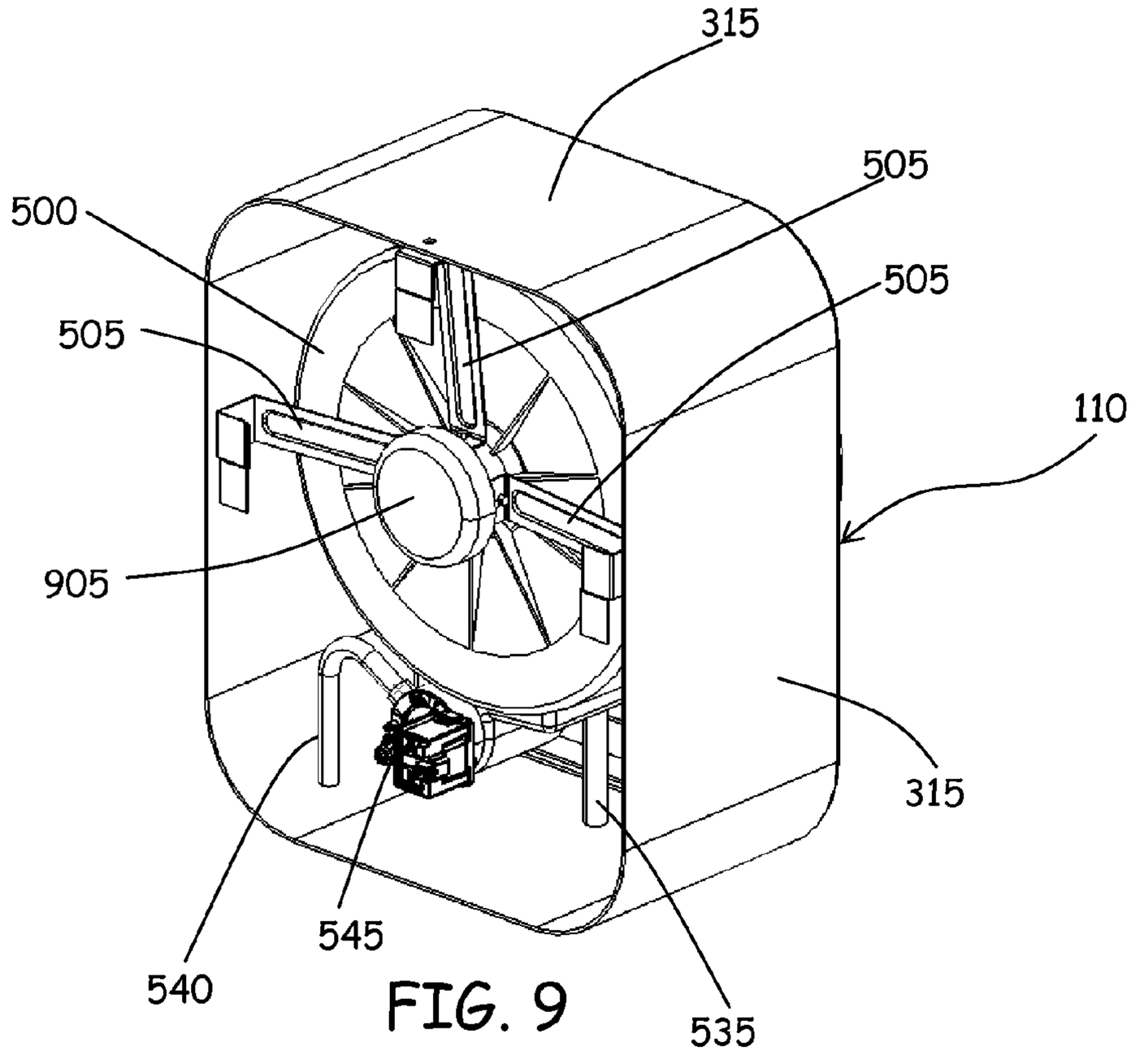
315
505
500
505
505
110
905
315
540
545
535

FIG. 9

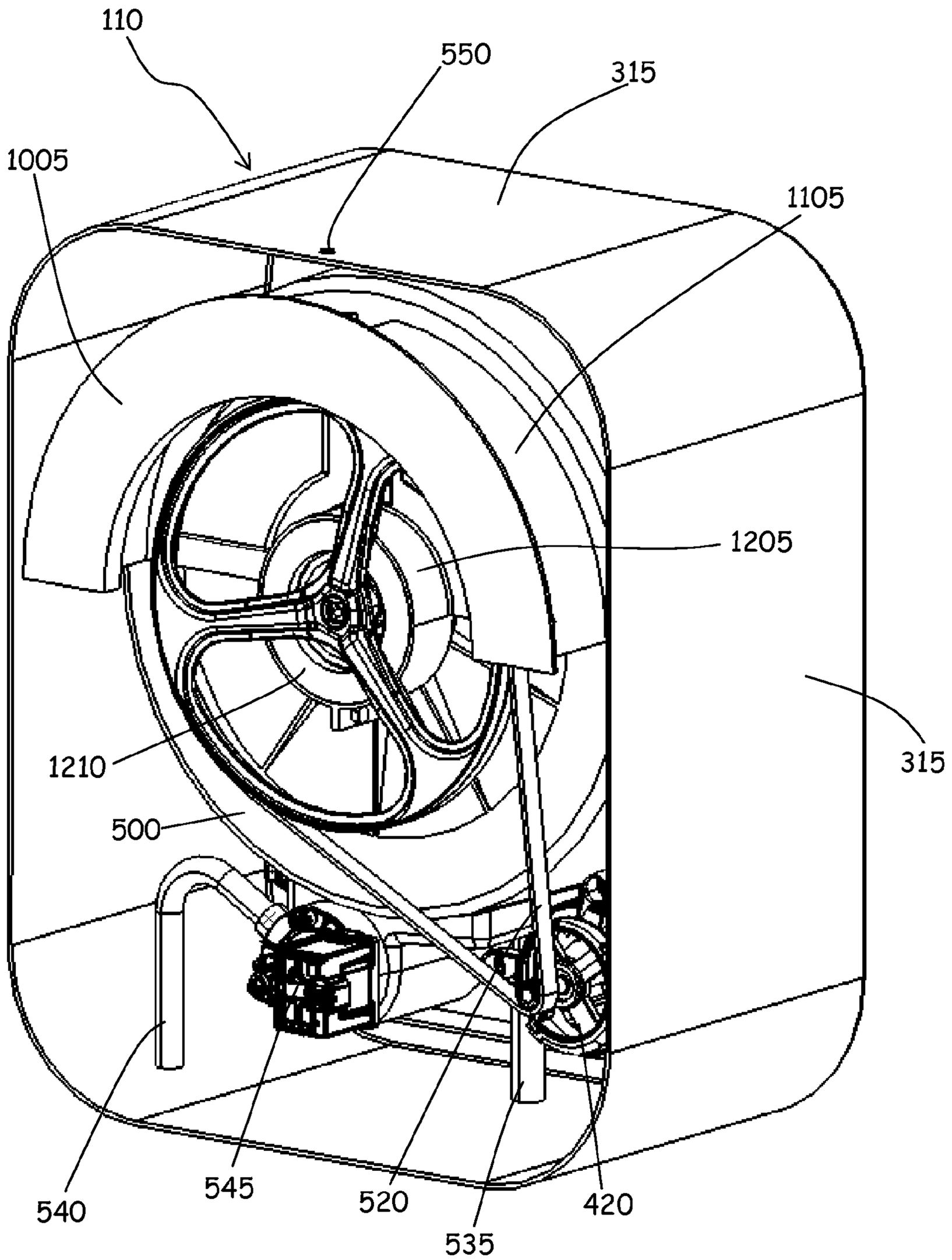

FIG. 10

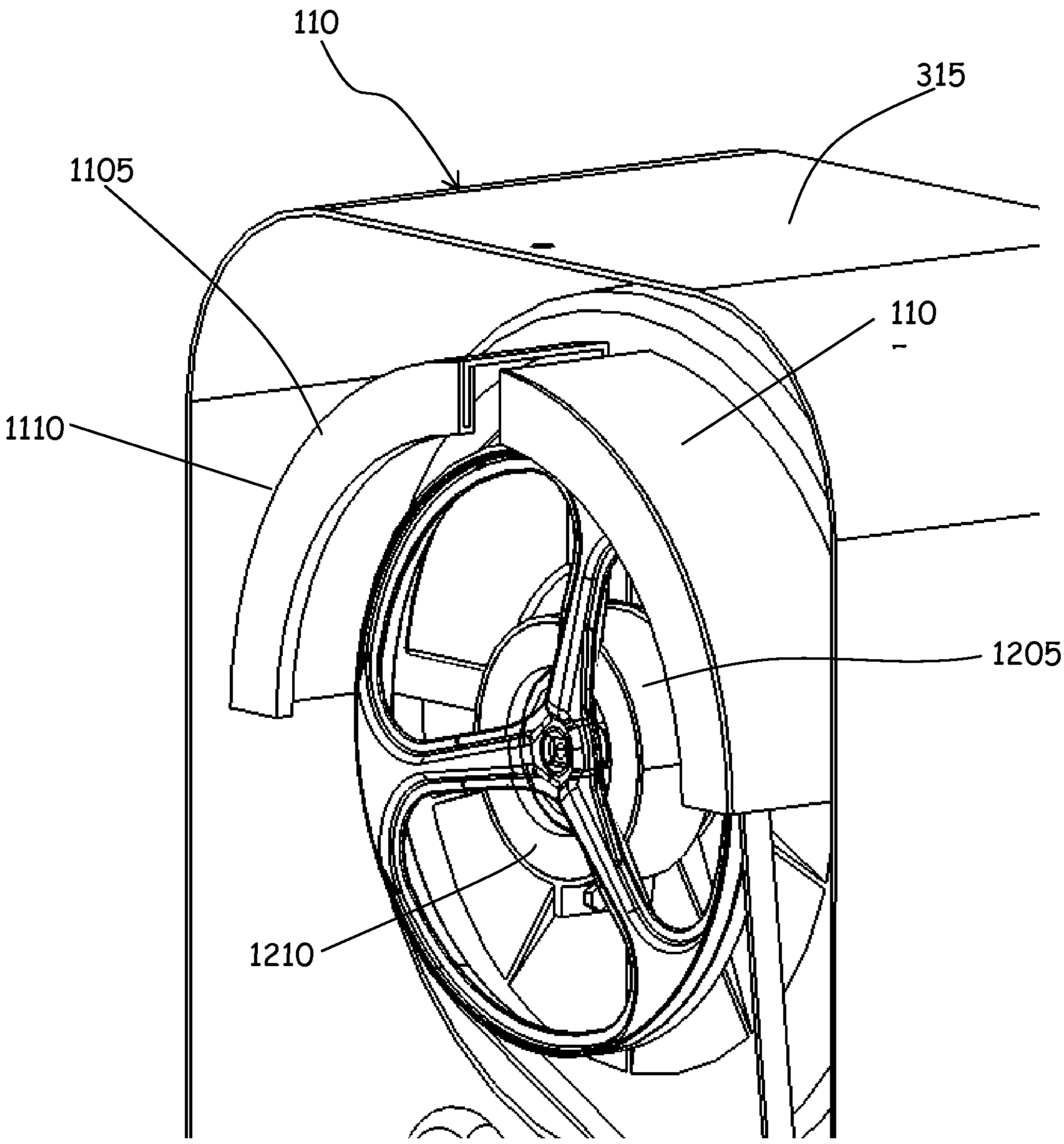

FIG. 11

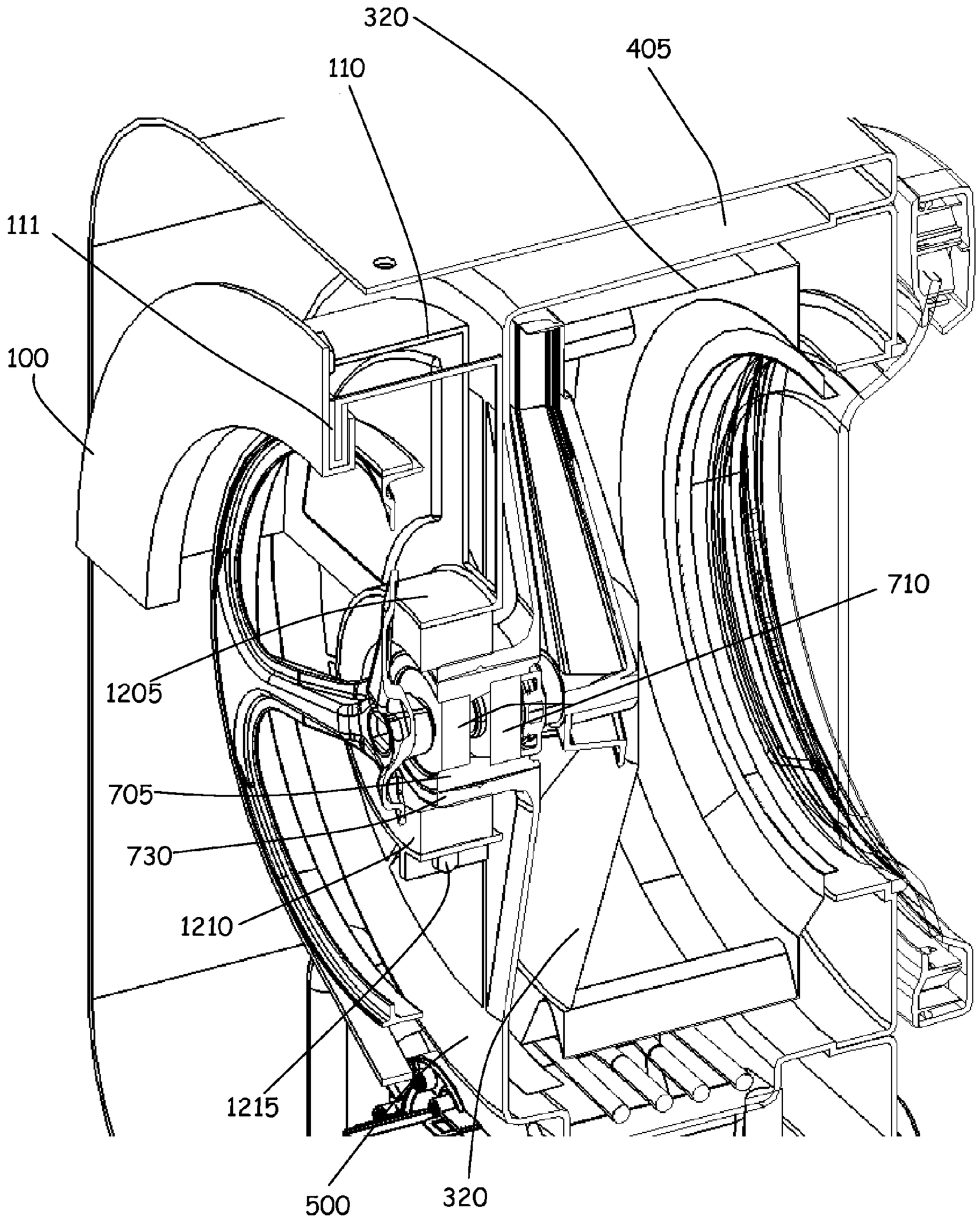

FIG. 12

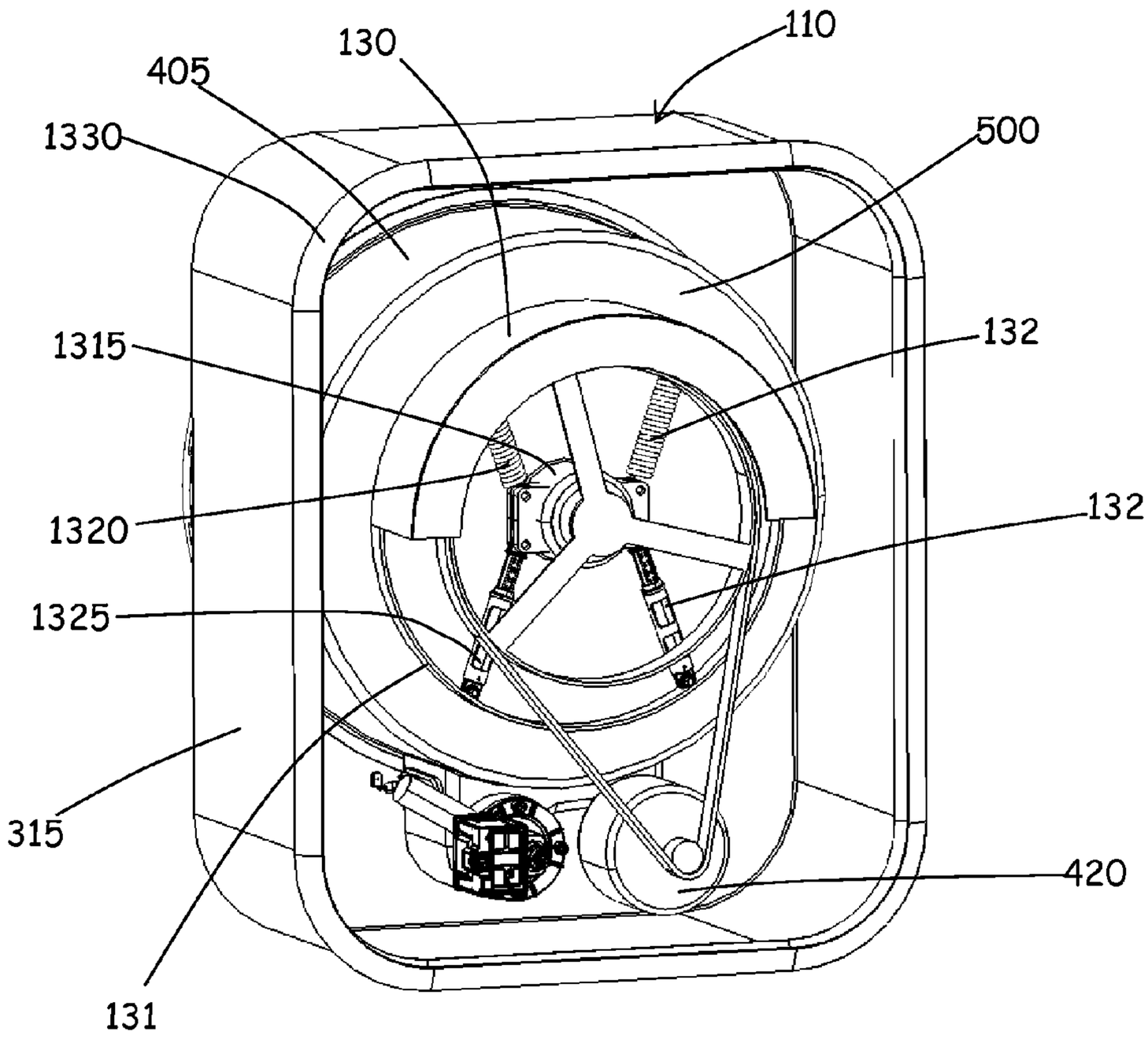
110
130
405
1330
500
1315
132
1320
132
1325
315
420
131

FIG. 13

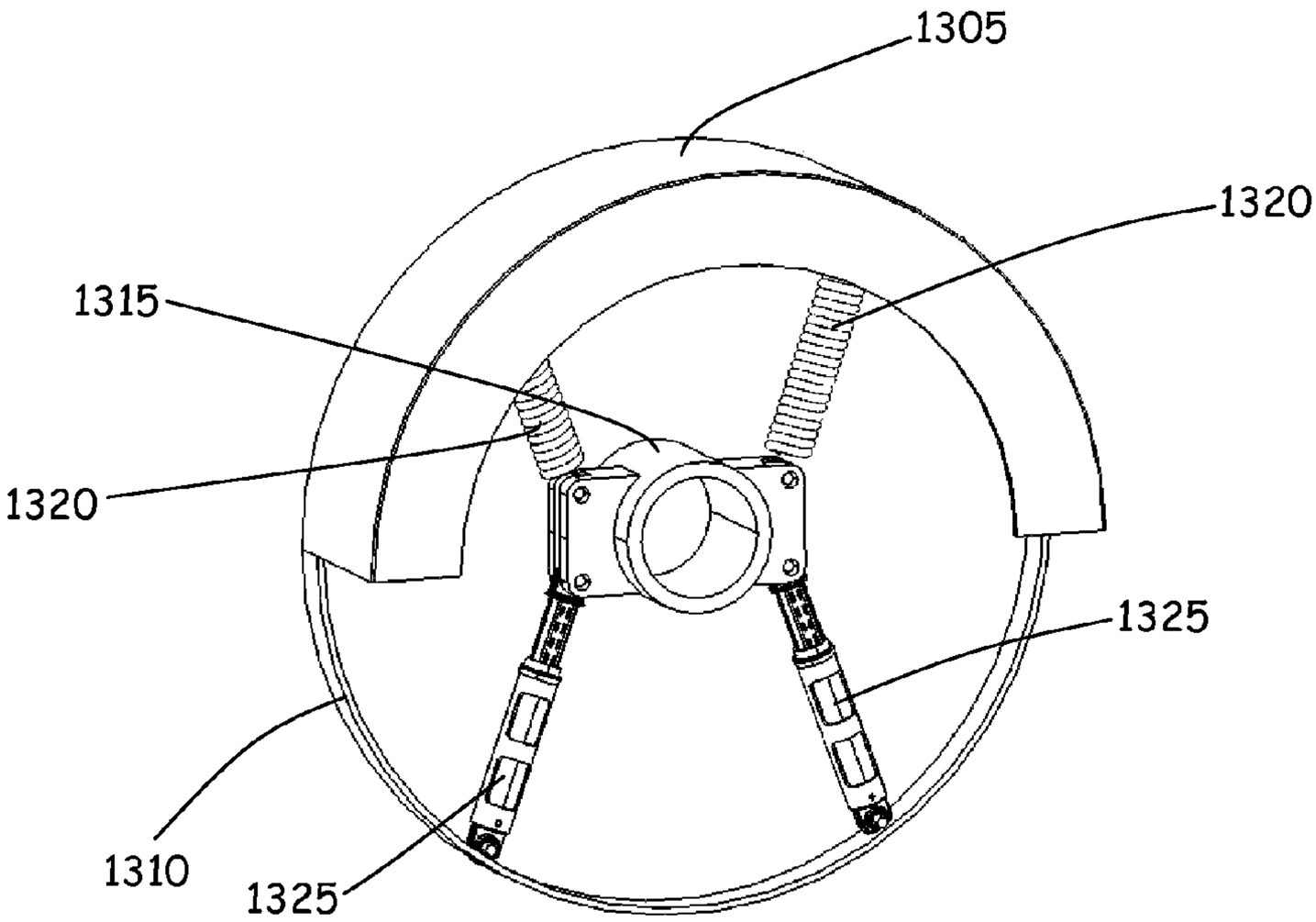
1305
1320
1315
1320
1325
1310
1325

FIG. 14

HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCE FOR WALL MOUNTING

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention generally relates to the field of household appliances, and in particular to laundry washing and washing/drying appliances like laundry washers and washers/dryers. Specifically, the present invention relates to a household appliance designed for wall mounting.

2. Overview of the Related Art

Household appliances designed for wall mounting are known in the art. This kind of installation is useful in those situations where space is so limited that there is no room for accommodating a floor-standing appliance, or for appliances of small size, designed with a reduced load capacity (e.g., 1.5-2 kg of cotton load), for example targeted to people living as singles, or for installation in hotel rooms, or aboard ships.

For example, U.S. Pat. No. 4,868,998 discloses a wall-mounted tumble dryer. Other examples of wall-mounted garment dryer are provided in U.S. Pat. No. 5,568,691.

Conventionally, the household appliance is mounted to the wall by means of brackets, attached to the rear side of the appliance external cabinet, and that engage counter-brackets attached to the wall by means of screws.

SUMMARY OF SELECTED ASPECTS OF THE INVENTION

The Applicant tackled the problem of devising a household appliance intended for wall mounting, which is of simple construction, is easy to assemble, and has a reduced production and purchase cost.

According to an aspect of the present invention, there is provided a household appliance comprising an external casing housing a rotatable drum assembly and adapted to be mounted to a wall. Said casing is shaped so as to define therein a tub for rotatably accommodating the rotatable drum assembly.

The casing is preferably formed of plastic material, by injection moulding.

In an embodiment, the tub is a generically cylindrical hollow space delimited by a generically cylindrical wall, integral with and rearwardly projecting from a cabinet front wall, and by a back wall integral with the cylindrical wall.

The casing comprises perimetral walls integral to the cabinet front wall and rearwardly projecting therefrom, from lateral corners of the front wall.

The generically cylindrical wall that laterally delimits the tub may be shaped to define a sump at the bottom of the tub, for accommodating a washing liquid heater.

For mounting it to a wall, the household appliance may comprise at least one support bracket intended to engage a corresponding counter-bracket attached to the wall so that the household appliance can be hung-up on the wall, said at least one support bracket being associated with a hub for rotatably supporting the rotatable drum assembly.

The hub may comprise a seat for accommodating bearings for rotatably supporting a driving shaft for driving in rotation the drum assembly.

The hub may in particular comprise a sleeve accommodating the bearings.

The back wall of the tub may have a portion either formed by injection moulding directly over said sleeve, or formed by injection moulding directly over said bearings so as to define said sleeve.

The at least one bracket may be either rigidly connected or elastically coupled to the rotatable drum assembly hub.

The at least one bracket may, at one end thereof, either be fixed to said sleeve or be fixed to a damping material collar inserted onto said sleeve.

The at least one bracket may comprise either a plurality of relatively narrow brackets arranged in circumferential succession, or the at least one bracket has an angular extension of approximately 180°.

The at least one bracket may be coupled to the hub by means of springs and dampers.

Said shaft may driven by a motor either by direct drive or through a belt transmission.

The household appliance may be one among a laundry washer and a laundry washer/dryer.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

These and other features and advantages of the present invention will be made clear by the following detailed description of some embodiments thereof, provided merely by way of non-limitative examples. The description should be read in conjunction with the attached drawings, wherein:

FIG. **1** shows a household appliance mounted to a wall according to the present invention;

FIG. **2** shows an embodiment according to the present invention of the household appliance of FIG. **1** detached from the wall and with the door open;

FIG. **3** shows the household appliance of FIG. **2** in exploded view;

FIG. **4** shows the household appliance of FIGS. **2** and **3** from the rear, sectioned along a vertical plane transverse to the drum rotation axis;

FIG. **5** is a view from the rear of the household appliance of FIGS. **2** to **4** showing a wall-mounting arrangement according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIGS. **6**A and **6**B show two details of the wall-mounting arrangement shown in FIG. **5**;

FIG. **7** shows the household appliance of FIG. **5** sectioned along a vertical plane containing the drum rotation axis;

FIG. **8** shows a detail of an alternative construction to what is shown in FIGS. **6**A and **6**B;

FIG. **9** shows an alternative drum driving arrangement according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **10** shows, in a view similar to that of FIG. **5**, another wall-mounting arrangement according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **11** shows a detail of wall-mounting brackets of the wall-mounting arrangement of FIG. **10**;

FIG. **12** shows the household appliance of FIGS. **10** and **11**, sectioned along a vertical plane containing the drum rotation axis;

FIG. **13** shows, in a view similar to that of FIG. **5**, a wall-mounting arrangement according to still another embodiment of the present invention; and

FIG. **14** shows a detail of a wall-mounting mounting bracket of the household appliance of FIG. **13**.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

Hereinafter, several embodiments according to the present invention of a household appliance designed for wall mounting, will be presented and described. Even if in the following description the assumption is made that the household appliance is a laundry washer, the invention applies straightforwardly to other types of appliances, like laundry washer/

dryers, and in general the advantages of the present invention are achievable in any household appliance having a rotating drum for accommodating the items to be treated.

Referring to the drawings, in FIG. **1** there is shown a laundry washer **100** according to the present invention, mounted to a wall **105**. The laundry washer **100** comprises an external casing **110**, accomodating therein a washing tub and, inside the tub, a rotating drum. The casing **110** has a front opening, for allowing access to the drum and load/unload of the items to be treated, and a door **115** is provided for closing the load/unload opening. Below the door **115**, a control and indicator panel (user interface) **120** is provided. Also shown in the drawing are connectors **125**, provided on the wall **105**, to which a fresh water intake and a discharge outlet of the laundry washer **100** are connected, respectively for the intake of fresh water (cold or/and hot) and for the discharge of the washing liquid.

FIGS. **2** to **4** show different views of the laundry washer **100**, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

The external casing **110**, generally rectangular in shape, is constituted by a plastic body, formed for example by injection moulding, open at the rear, and the tub, denoted **305** in FIG. **3**, is integrated in, integrally formed with the casing **110**, being in one piece therewith. In other words, the casing **110** is shaped so as to define thereinside the tub **305**; in particular, as better visible in FIG. **4**, the tub **305** is a substantially cylindrical hollow space delimited laterally by a generically cylindrical wall **405** rearwardly projecting from, a front wall **310** of the casing **110**, and, rearwardly, by a back wall **500** better visible in FIG. **5**, the cylindrical wall **405** and the back wall **500** being in one piece with the casing **110**. The casing **110** has four perimetral walls **315** that extend rearwardly from respective corners of the front wall **310**. The casing **110**, with its four perimetral walls **315**, the cylindrical wall **405** laterally delimiting the tub **305**, and the tub back wall **500** are a single piece construction, formed for example by injection moulding of plastic material.

The dimensions of the casing **110** are such as to be able to accommodate, in addition to the drum **320** of desired size and capacity (e.g., 1.5-2 Kg of cotton load), all the necessary components of the laundry washer. For example, a heater **325** for heating the washing liquid, which, as visible in FIG. **4**, is mounted at the bottom of the tub **305**, just above a sump **410** defined by a downwardly projecting portion **415** of the cylindrical wall **405** that defines the tub **305**. Other components include for example a motor for rotating the drum and, possibly, the means for the motion transmission from the motor to the drum, the hydraulic circuit for the circulation of the washing liquid, and a liquid discharge pump or valve. In case the appliance is a washer/dryer, additional or different components are accommodated within the casing **110**, like a drying air circulation system, including a demoisturizing system for example comprising an air-cooled condenser, a water-cooled condenser, a condenser part of a heat pump system, a defluff filter and any other known component necessary for a dryer.

The door **115** may be hinged at **205** to a circular front flange **210** that is mounted frontally (for example by means of screws and/or glue and/or welding) to the front wall **310** of the cabinet **110**, along the rim of the load/unload opening. The flange **210**, in addition to being provided with the hinge for the door **115**, also incorporates a safety door lock mechanism **215**, and also has sealing purposes.

The control panel **120** is accommodated in a recess **330** formed in the front wall **310** of the cabinet, below the load/unload opening.

In the following some possible wall-mounting arrangements are presented, being intended that other mounting arrangements are possible.

In FIGS. **5** to **9**, a wall-mounting arrangement according to an embodiment of the present invention for mounting to the wall **105** the laundry washer **100** is shown. In this embodiment, for mounting the laundry washer **100** to the wall **105**, three angularly spaced apart, relatively narrow brackets **505** are provided, at the rear of the appliance. The brackets **505**, which can be in any suitable material, for example sheet metal, are, at the two ends thereof, bent to form appendages **505***a* and **505***b* approximately orthogonal to a main bracket arm **505***c*, the latter extending radially from the hub of the rotatable drum.

In particular, one of the brackets **505** extends approximately vertically, whereas the remaining two extend approximately horizontally in opposite directions. It is however pointed out that the number of brackets **505** and their orientation do not constitute a limitation for the present invention.

The three brackets **505** are attached at their radially inner end **505***a* to the hub that rotatably supports the rotatable drum, as visible in detail in FIGS. **6**A, **6**B and **7**. In particular, in correspondence of their appendage **505***a*, the brackets **505** are fixed to a hub sleeve **705** accommodating therein one or more roller bearings **710** for rotatably supporting a shaft **715** that drives the drum **320** to rotate. The shaft **715** is, in the example here considered, connected to a driven pulley **510** that is driven to rotate by an electric motor **420** through a belt transmission **520**. The other end of the shaft **715** is inserted into a collar **720** of a (typically three-arm) spider **725** that is conventionally fixed to the rear wall of the drum **320**.

The brackets **505** are each fixed to the sleeve **705** by means, for example, of (a pair of) screws **605**. The sleeve **705** that accommodates the roller bearings **710** may be coated by a plastic sleeve or collar **730** that is part, in one piece with the back wall **500** of the washing tub **305**, and that is formed by injection moulding directly over the sleeve **705** containing the bearings **510** (in other words, for the production of the cabinet **110** the sleeve with the roller bearings already inserted is put into the mould used to form the cabinet). The sleeve **705** may be formed so to have, in three angularly spaced apart positions, (one or two) radial protrusions with threaded holes **610** for receiving the screws **605**, the openings of the holes **610** remaining accessible after the plastic collar **730** is formed by injection of plastic over the sleeve **705**.

The sleeve **705** may be in metal, e.g. in aluminium, or in plastic, and, in this latter case, it may in turn be formed by injection moulding directly over the bearings **710**. In alternative embodiments of the invention, the function of the sleeve **705** may be performed by the plastic collar **730**, the collar **730** being in this case formed by injection moulding directly over the bearings **710** (in this case, the roller bearings **730** are put in the mould used to form the cabinet **110**).

In alternative embodiments of the invention, the brackets **505** may be in one piece with the sleeve **705** (and thus the brackets are of the same material as the sleeve **705**), as shown in FIG. **8**. Another possible alternative is to form the brackets **705** in one piece with the plastic collar **730**, i.e. as an integral part of the cabinet **110**.

At their other, radially external appendage **505***b*, the brackets **505** are bent so as to have a generically "U" shape, adapted to cooperate with respective counter-brackets **530** attached to the wall **105**, for example by means of screws (not shown). The counter-bracket **530** that is associated with the bracket **505** extending vertically has an inverted "L" shape, so as to provide an upper abutment surface for the appendage **505***b* of the vertical bracket **505**.

In FIG. **5** there are also shown flexible pipes **535** and **540**, respectively for the connection, for example by means of quick couplings, to the connectors **125** on the wall **105**, respectively for intaking fresh water and for discharging the washing liquid. Also visible is a discharge pump **545** which is mounted at the rear of the sump **410** and to the outlet of which the pipe **540** is connected. The pipe **540** preferably forms an inverted siphon, so as to ensure that, within the tub **305**, a prescribed amount of water/washing liquid remains when the laundry washer is in operation.

In this way, the laundry washer **100** may be mounted to the wall **105** by directly hanging it up to the counter-brackets **530**, in such a way that the "U"-shaped ends **505***b* of the brackets **505** engage each a respective counter-bracket **530**. The laundry washer **100** may be mounted to the wall **105** already fully assembled, or with the casing **110** removed (for facilitating the subsequent operations of hydraulic connections of the appliance to the connectors **125**).

Once hung up to the counter-brackets **530**, the cabinet **110** may be secured at **550**, by a screw, to the upper counter-bracket **530**.

The laundry washer **100** is simple in construction, has a reduced number of parts (in particular, due to the fact that the cabinet and the washing tub are in a single piece), is easy to assemble and thus can be produced at reduced costs. In addition, thanks to the fact that the laundry washer **100** is hung-up to the wall through the brackets **505** that are fixed to the hub that rotatably supports the rotatable drum **320**, particularly to the hub sleeve **705** accommodating the roller bearings **710** for rotatably supporting the drum drive shaft **715**, the forces originating during the drum rotation are homogeneously transmitted to the wall: it is as if the drum is rotatably supported directly by the wall. Neither the appliance cabinet **110** nor the walls of the tub **305** have to sustain any force originating from the wall mounting, so the cabinet and particularly the tub can be formed relatively light and thin in structure, and in a plastic material not particularly resistant to mechanical stresses, thus of relatively low cost.

In alternative embodiments of the invention, a direct drive of the shaft **515** may be envisaged, instead of the belt transmission **220**, as shown in FIG. **9**. The direct drive has the advantage that the structure is more balanced, thanks to the fact that the electric motor **905** is coaxial to the drum rotation axis.

Another embodiment of the present invention is shown in FIGS. **10** to **12**. This embodiment differs from the previously described one in that the three relatively narrow brackets **505** are replaced by one or two brackets **1105** having wide angular extension; for example, the two brackets **1105** may overall extend for 180°. The radially outer end of the two brackets **1105**, bent in a similar way as the radially outer ends **505***b* of the brackets **505**, so as to have a generically "U" shape, engages a counter-bracket **1005**, having angular extension corresponding to that of the two brackets **1105**, and that is attached to the wall **105**, for example by means of screws (not shown).

As visible in FIG. **12**, the brackets **1105** extend radially from a central collar **1205**, which is preferably inserted over a vibration-damping material sleeve **1210** over the plastic collar **730** or inserted over the plastic collar **730**; the brackets and the collar **1205** may be formed in metal or in plastic material. The collar **1205** may for example be secured to the vibration-damping material sleeve **1210** by means of one or more screws (not shown), and/or the collar **1205** may have a longitudinal cut so to be tightenable, by means e.g. of a screw-and-nut **1215**, on the vibration-damping material sleeve **1210**.

Optionally (or in alternative to the provision of the vibration-damping material sleeve **1210**), between the ends of the brackets **1105** and the counter-bracket **1005**, a band of a vibration damping material **1110** is interposed.

Compared to the previously described wall-mounting arrangement, this arrangement allows a better distribution and transmission of the forces to the wall.

Yet another embodiment of the present invention is shown in FIGS. **13** and **14**. In this embodiment, the laundry washer **100** is mounted to the wall **105** by means of a bracket **1305**, of relatively wide angular extension, for example approximately 180° as in the previous embodiment, which in operation engages a counter-bracket (not shown), similar to the counter-bracket **1005** as in the previous embodiment. The bracket **1305** has a narrower portion **1310** that extends 360°. A central sleeve **1315** is elastically coupled to the bracket **1305** by means of two springs **1320** and two hydraulic or pneumatic dampers **1325**. The sleeve **1315** is part of the hub that rotatably supports the rotatable drum **320**, and for example the sleeve **1315** is inserted on the plastic collar **730**, or the sleeve **1305** may perform the function of the sleeve **705** of the previously described embodiment.

Along the rear rim of the cabinet **110**, a rubber frame **1330** is preferably provided, which, when the laundry washer **100** is hung up to the wall-mounted counter-bracket, adheres to the wall **105** surface, and acts as a vibration absorber.

Optionally, an elastic connection, e.g. a spring (not shown) between the sleeve **1305** and the wall **105** may be provided for, in order to maintain the cabinet **101** adherent to the wall **105** even when the drum is loaded.

Several embodiments of the present invention has been here described, however it will be clear to those skilled in the art that other embodiments are possible, all falling within the scope of the invention as defined in the appended claims.

The invention claimed is:

1. A washing appliance comprising an external casing housing a rotatable drum assembly, the external casing having a rear side adapted to be mounted to a wall and a front side including an access opening into the rotatable drum assembly, wherein

said casing is shaped so as to define therein a tub configured for containing water/washing liquid and rotatably accommodating the rotatable drum assembly, said tub is integrally formed with the casing in one piece therewith, and

said casing further defining, outside of said tub, a cabinet space housing therein a drive system including a drive motor for driving a drum of said rotatable drum assembly, said drive motor is housed within the cabinet space.

2. The washing appliance of claim **1**, wherein the casing is made of plastic material, and is formed by injection moulding.

3. The washing appliance of claim **1**, wherein the tub is a generically cylindrical hollow space delimited by a generically cylindrical wall, integral with and rearwardly projecting from a cabinet front wall, and by a back wall integral with the cylindrical wall.

4. The washing appliance of claim **3**, wherein the casing comprises perimetral walls integral to the front wall and rearwardly projecting therefrom, from lateral corners of the front wall.

5. The washing appliance of claim **3**, wherein the generically cylindrical wall that laterally delimits the tub is shaped to define a sump at a bottom of the tub, for accommodating a washing liquid heater.

6. The washing appliance of claim **1**, comprising at least one support bracket configured to engage a corresponding

counter-bracket attached to the wall so that the washing appliance can be hung-up on the wall, said at least one support bracket being associated with a hub for rotatably supporting the rotatable drum assembly.

7. The washing appliance of claim **6**, wherein the hub comprises a seat for accommodating bearings for rotatably supporting a driving shaft for driving in rotation the drum assembly.

8. The washing appliance of claim **7**, wherein the hub comprises a sleeve accommodating the bearings.

9. The washing appliance of claim **8**, wherein a back wall of the tub has a portion either formed by injection moulding directly over said sleeve, or formed by injection moulding directly over said bearings so as to define said sleeve.

10. The washing appliance of claim **6**, wherein the at least one bracket is either rigidly connected or elastically coupled to the rotatable drum assembly hub.

11. The washing appliance of claim **8**, wherein the at least one bracket is either rigidly connected or elastically coupled to the rotatable drum assembly hub and is, at one end thereof, either fixed to said sleeve or fixed to a damping material collar inserted onto said sleeve.

12. The washing appliance of claim **6**, wherein the at least one bracket comprises a plurality of relatively narrow brackets arranged in circumferential succession.

13. The washing appliance of claim **6**, wherein the at least one bracket is coupled to the hub by means of springs and dampers.

14. The washing appliance of claim **7**, wherein the casing is formed by injection molding and said shaft is driven by the drive motor either by direct drive or through a belt transmission.

15. The washing appliance of claim **1**, wherein the washing appliance is one among a laundry washer and a combination laundry washer/dryer.

16. The washing appliance of claim **3**, comprising at least one support bracket configured to engage a corresponding counter-bracket attached to the wall so that the washing appliance can be hung-up on the wall, said at least one support bracket being associated with a hub for rotatably supporting the rotatable drum assembly.

17. The washing appliance of claim **16**, wherein the hub comprises a seat for accommodating bearings for rotatably supporting a driving shaft for driving in rotation the drum assembly.

18. The washing appliance of claim **17**, wherein the hub comprises a sleeve accommodating the bearings.

19. The washing appliance of claim **6**, wherein the at least one bracket comprises a bracket forming an angular extension generally about said hub.

20. The washing appliance of claim **19**, wherein the angular extension is of approximately 180°.

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